REFLECTIONS

1976

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Vol. VIII

1976

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We gratefully acknowledge the support of the North Carolina Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. We also extend special appreciation to Mr. Bruce Lawrence of Grey and Creech.

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portrayal of one man

some far less destructive heart
than mine weeps and writes these pages,
salute to modern lover times,
dreams of tinsel lace--

fumbling, i find no chart,
key to the universe lost, chaos
chaos, chaos--

then countless i fall
muted and warm, dauntless writer
from the thirties speaking of eccentric
jazz poems that won blue ribbons
in saratoga, san francisco--

mental dunce, they say,
metal-mind with no emotion
take him out back, lean him against
the opera house, and see that
no one salutes him.

Errol Miller

Straw Valley Past

Tiny ghosts of seagulls or possibly
the dusty remains of
cotton (candy) thread came floating
by and around me in the
newness of sunlight
like the first snow of the year
resting on innocent clothes outside
on the line
    Continuing its journey (which began
    in New Delhi and on to a small
    flame and a piece of clay) I watch it
    Appear then
                disappear

    Appear
            then ...

Appear.
    Smoke is
    forever.

Tommy Swinney

Out beyond the breakers and the houses
Far out to the end of the island
Where the sea oats still wave
And the green choppy grass still gives
Birth to cockleburs
There the little silver minnows float
All the way up to the shore
They wiggle and nestle among the tiny
Waves that try to impress the sand

He caught one
He actually did--took his old shoe
Kicked one to the shore
For bait
For his sharp, rusty, we'll-all-get-lockjaw-hook.
But before the murder
I saw the tiny minnow
As much more than a fish
His silver shone brighter than mother's hutch
colors turned as he wiggled
out of the shrimp-smell palm

In the end
All the color, all the sheen
Was taken and driven onto a hook
He wiggled and died
"They make the best bait, better than blood worms."
He took his line and cast it out
The minnow had gone back to the deeper
part of the sea
And the boy, the boy never moved from his place
on the shore.

Mary Ann Farrell

SALT-WATER MARSHES AT 6 A.M.

A fog horn rumbles
Maybe twenty miles away
In a soft, muffled tone so faintly heard
At these salt-water marshes
That it blends in to become only background
For this summer morning's silence
Which, like its stillness, is so thick
It's almost tangible.

Jane Best

Ghost

A half-forgotton ghost came slipping
    out of the crack of a closing door
Whispering a half-remembered melody
    but the words were long-since dead
Crying as it tried to wrap
    its unsubstantial arms about me
Sighing, pathetically, as I pushed it away.
    Back,
        Back,
            Back through the crack
             of the closing door
              to where the poor, lost
               half-formed thing
                cannot hurt me, anymore.

Aleeta Walker

The Actor

He gulps
the harsh wind, sharp
and brown with brittle grease
and powdered time, thick
air in the lungs
ragged paint
for masks imbued
with life, consumed and used,
consumed, renewed,
forgot upon the refuse
heap of yellowed print
and faded jaded photographs
of tired words and restless
hands that drum and hum in tune to
flickering sounds and blackened lights
rusted rumblings
of other nights and nights
to come again and in the
fear-soaked depths of
thought he stops, and stops
at last to stop once
more, before the wrinkled stinking
suit of charade he wears becomes
his own

Bruce Van Blarcom

Peaceful Valley Tressel

Windshield wipers beat away the years
as old unpaved roads bounce me back
and down to the foot of a rotting tressel.
Down to first street, Mutt Upchurch's store

NO CREDIT! No nickel cakes, sodas on
payday, no pickled sausages

Down by the mines (where I shook the mica
from my barefeet to put on shoes for the
world outside) to the foot of Crowder's mountain,
walking in the tracks of pulpwood trucks, then,
to wade the dead creek bed, to run forgetting
the years spent in leaving,
the race for the tressel and the five-o-nine,
where a waving hand draws a short blast
from the engine, hoping that the soul in steel
remembers the joys of idolatry.

Tom Philbeck

Crustacean

The soul is like a crustacean
Each year of its life it grows
Deeper into a shell

Unless it is plucked out in youth
And served in a love-hate salad

It grows in isolation
Harder each day it festers
Twisting alone in the mud
Or smiling in sunshiney solitude

Each new crust that its body takes on
Makes it harder to feel the earth
The rocks and the flowers
They feel the same

And each new shell is a step towards death

John Lattimore

Beach With No Sand y las gavitos

One candle sits in the corner
Alone lit.
Pierces darkness like the
Hot knives of Thor
through parkay
(Outside the light a party happens!---sshh!)
I am there with my conscience
nagging as if I were the last person
it expected to forget to tell the newsboy
to cancel the paper...but there is really
no one else
To answer to. Huddled
I face the corner and am ready to
"come out fighting."
Martin and his wierd friends
are coming to visit.
That's all I need!
We don't like them.
They're always talking
about men and microphones.

I guess they're good for a laugh.

Enter Martin and co.
my tears fal
l
melting my blanket
of
depression
and righteousness
Now I am a new child.
Naked.

Tommy Swinney

Speedy Buddy,
Blow-Dry Styling Curtailed Hair,
or Genius, Which It Was

Left right up down
cross reverse, no cross,
swirl left, no good,
bad turn, slow down
poof zzzzzz
short cut whirrr
oops the Alps
down to the valley
straight on the straightway
left road middle road
pit stop!

U-turn at the circle
around the hill
down the way
watch out for the tree
in the middle of the field
cow-licked again
must people have ears?
pit stop!

Move in with heat,
swish turn SWISH
slow down this lap
go forward, up,
kill ignition, glide to finish
receive the crown
$5.00, please!

B. Cox

August Moon

August Moon, you're the beginning
Of the end
Lying in lazy, watery luminescence
In the western sky
You've known
The heat of summer
Blistering, sticky days while you waited
To preside over muggy, sleepless nights
You've known
The warm tint of late spring
Sneaking, peeping through rafters
With your promise
You've known
The biting wind of winter
And early equinox
"Vernal" you called it
And made it sound like a fertility rite

Now you have passed through the sky
Unto August
Stagnant now, not quite living
Not quite dead
But waiting
For the next step in your great waltz with the Sun
Leads to death
The mellowness of old aged Autumn
Comes first of course
But death lurks right behind it

It is now late August in the year of your life
Your menopause is reached
As you sit within your doldrums
Awaiting your turn in the game

John Lattimore

Me and My Gal In My MGB

Almanac
records full moon

but since It's raining
I can't see it

though it beams
a perfect light
I am darkened in the rain

My brother says it
differently
that though the rain has
shadowed all
the moon still sheds a perfect light

either way
the top is up
and Godsey's Meadows' grass is wet

B. Cox

Life's Tapestry Awaits

Threading the loom
takes time - o time.
Warp threads line up
with care.

Reed waits undressed.
Strong warp meets dent.
Space waiting there.
Expect

Expecting life.
Giving warp strength.
Thread after thread
for welf.

Welf waits alone
biding time - abiding.
Square blocks on graph
rehearse.

Rehearsing lines
writ in cold blood,
fiven in love
not hate.

Half of a youth
goes into warp
Background grows wide,
apace.

Woof makes the piece
Pick after pick
Each shed a gap
now filled.

Filling's the trick-
thrusting batten-
compressing force-
repeat.

Repeating, so,
the timeless sound
heartbeat thunder,
slowing.

Sometines stopping.
Suffers no harm
but delay-O
delay

Resuming beat,
pattern repleat
with scraps of past
and now.

Colors begin,
virtue and sin,
mood indigo
now form.

As tide returns
so does rythm
from graph to loom
transfer.

Gold in circle,
diaper scraps,
broken heart shards
creep in.

Pattern of life
follows no scheme,
includes a scream
of hue.

The fabric tightens.

R. Wolbarsht

The thirst to know is the most unquenchable of all thirsts. It cannot be satiated by any amount of indulgence. Yet it must be triggered from within, and, unlike physical thirst, it can be extinguished by an act of will. It is the only irritant that we know about which will go away if ignored.

* * * *

The essence of being human is the striving, yearning, stretching, growing aspect, and teaching ceases to be human when the learner experiences no anguish.

Gil Blackburn

Payroll

Small towns, big hypocrisy,
everyone related by blood or cotton mill payrolls.
Grandma, uncles, aunts spin yarns about connections,
abortions, operations, love affairs with
yardman,
delivery man,
permanently-tanned man,
while mill machines click and spin,
weaving small towns, small people.

Helen Cornwell Logan

Compass

You dare not say it
    That you do not know
        your name
That it is painted
    in aerosol--red--
The subway is your movie
    You watched it till it was
gone, leaving you at the
    turnstile,
        wondering.

You would settle for a
    name signed in air
by a bird,
    surer of his migrations
or graffiti in a pay toilet

Your hand trembles
    without a pencil
    without a needle
Sometimes you will pawn
    what you have already
        pawned

Just to be sure.

Barbara Street

Field Trip

Mr. Tartufe, general science, surely sensed
our love of learning or the other way around,
took the whole ninth grade down to Devil's Hole:
see how this October grass keeps popping up
its head faster than before, such compulsion
while it still can, to do its thing. The old
one from behind his cloud so wants the young
to know what things are all about:
white water never vacillates, fills any void,
fast, eager to seek its lowest level.
And so did Hobart though who would know
until June's rumors flew. We hunker there,
God's flashlights too much on our heads:
the calcium in our bones was tindered in just such
ancient stars, seeded into our dust, the slower
sun-type ones spun off their planets as I now
spin off my notes. I catch on slow: the more
advanced have spun off on their own, the rah-rah
pedastaled alone on a black gum stump, tuned to
the night bird's plaint, dry leaves crackling
close about but out of sight. Our mentor
enjoins us to enjoy, I jot it down so he will love
me. The others older bolder made that tag stick
like rosin-then tag me to come along on
side trips, cagey, I now discern so that the sage
will trust them to report back (1) their findings:
Clyde is shy only in classrooms (2) queries: truly
should Bonnie, Mary or Pearl be honor-tapped? Who
discovered Rose? (3) exposures, disclosures: I'd
find for Cliff but they've left me alone again,
gone on into life sciences. Did our seer jeer
us on, or did he in passing weep, namely for me,
mainly for me taken unawares, beguiled, unto an
innominate group bosom? Who was more used?
this child? the lass in the grass? the class?
the rube seduced by knowing stars
that dealt in alchemy?

Nina Palmer

The Southern Red Fox

"Les hommes ont oublié cette vérité, dit le renard. Mais tu ne dois pas l'oublier. Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que tu as apprivoisé. Tu es responsable de ta rose."

--Saint-Exupery

Crazy as a bed bug, certifiably insane,
Fox mad, ready to lay false tracks,
You have not forgotten.
Affection is a flower,
Subject to droughts and assailing winds.
I droop and wither,
As heavy headed sunflowers
In need of cooling rains.
Encircle me. Come closer.
Till me, tend me with practiced hands.
I am your rose, your thorn, your bane.
Guard me jealously. Fertilize. Feed.
Give me gentle rains
That I too might flower,
Spilling forth love's new seed.

Virginia L. Rudder

Gallery

In the masoleum
wrapped in the shrouded silence
of eternal dusky nights
they hang
forever executed
red velvet chains
rope their separate mirrored biers
Picassos
Don Quixiote
Blue Nude

Suzette Collins Thompson

The Habya's Daughter

Mad Meg sits up in bed eating snuff
while in another room
they sing about cutting hempstalks faster

She is a collector of grasshoppers -
her house is full of jars
containing dead or dying ones

When they are caught she holds them, struggling
And running for the house to wash her hands
she remembers one in particular - as if in a dream
sitting on the hood of an old car

It had broken itself against a windshield
and would not move again (frightened by
the nothingness of glass)

Even now she imagines tickings
from somewhere among the rows of jars
but lies down again carefully

Meg has been known to sleep all night
with tobacco juice in her mouth, without spitting,
and shouldn't that be enough for an old woman
to worry over?

"Habya! Habya! Habya!
Tear down the hempstalks,
eat up the old men and woman,
and carry off the little girl!"

Wayne Blankenship

Unicorn

On the final night before the
nights would stop once more
we hunched together, you and I
among the garbage and the dreams
mislaid upon the silent bedroom floor...
like small brown spiders swinging
slow against the face of God,
we had wandered loose the evening in
ceaseless toddle toward oblivion
till dawn hung still with worn-out love and
fragile sleep and time stretched thin
across the faded misty streets
and the smell of hash and bourbon turned
to steel beneath the flutter of your
half-closed lips and distant eyes...
silent then, in a whisper of
early-morning fog and huddled
haste we made an end again to
pain and fear and husky words of love--
and in the final fumbling
moment, pressed-close apart, alive
and dead, your sad and burning
smile became my secret single
poem out of rhyme for all
the space, for all the dreams, and for
the measured tread of time that lies
behind...

Bruce Van Blarcom

Daughters of Daedalus

They weep for Icarus with wings of wax,
His father's gift of freedom from the earth,
And Daedalus, who placed upon his back
The heritage allowed all sons at birth.
And Icarus fell plunging to the sea;
His careless flight brought stark
   and ugly death.
But though the sun destroyed him,
   he lived free
He felt the joy of choice in every breath.
I weep for all the daughters without wings
Who live to pace the length of the ravine,
For all the trapped whose fates we do not sing,
Whose tedious journeys pass us by unseen.
They weep for sons too soon destroyed by fate.
But hideous too the death that comes too late.

Joyce Brown

Wedding Song

Gladiators trading bands of gold
White gowns masking motives of black
Forgotten coal, shiny promises,
Lifetime sentence, can't go back to
yesterday

Bobby Setzer

Men Watch You Graceful Flyer

A bird glides in the distant sky
Unfocused in my young eyes.
It flies neither toward me nor away
Yet it flies; not troubling itself
To make itself known to me--what family, what species.

The regular form, soaring, circling;
Abosulte beauty, positive balance.
It sees behind me, before me,
Over and around.

Men watch you graceful flier,
   winged offspring of your Mother.
Some nearer to you than I, some farther away;
Dreaming of you, singing of you,
   coveting your inborn secret,
Your inborn power of escape.

Planes and ships glide on the sea;
Sailing out, out. Men, teased by technology,
Temporarily intruding upon your domain;
Bound to return.

The humility, the majesty of the bird;
Perching on roof-tops, perching high,
   above the timber line.
Perching for hours; watching periferally,
Peering down on those bound, within themselves,
To callous, lethargic existence.

Ah flight! Silent, sensual gift;
Sailing out, out--the natural act.
Above those who watch him, observing the confusion,
The bird; head cocked boldly forward,
Spreads his wings full span quick, as a spark,
And ascends, gliding into the distant sky.

Erin Russell Anderson

The Wizard's Magic Dust

The wizard's magic dust
sprinkles upon my window
as the morning breaks
beautiful...
With free birds and butterflies.

I wake from my Alice in Wonderland
to find a handsome prince warming
my cheek with candy kisses.

Hastily...
I rub sand from my eyes
to be sure that this is no
illusion

And just at that mystical, magical, miracle
moment...something warm, wiggley, and wet...
tugs at my breast.

Like finding a lucky rabbits foot
I find that I have been granted my fondest wish.

Debbie Pierson

Searing Dreams

Candle flickered genies aimed at the moon, yet
nothing to answer the questioning flame -
the hour now moored to the dock,
where only the breeze accompanied it

The laughter, gone, had but delayed the ebbing
when the moon could not
Effortless stars winked in mocking irony
at the mighty, the frail

Can one not ask but to be,
that no life is valued above all this
   scratched pane,
where once a pressed nose brought a smile.

From the sea came all,
To it returns nothing,
   save the hiss of quenched flames

Tom Hutchins

Brownie

Brownie stands with a grunt and limps toward a kettle of boiling potatoes. He pours salt into his palm and lets it slide into the scummy water. "Here now. That hog'll eat these taters right up," he says, straightening, drawing a khaki sleeve across his face. "Always give'm salts this time. Keep 'em from sweatin' weight. Gave my last hog salts everyday. Weighed out more than six hunnerd when we killed 'em." Boiling potatoes is part of Brownie's daily routine; he is trying to make his hog weigh more than the one butchered last Thanksgiving. While he works--fanning coals, chopping kindling, stirring the steaming kettle of potatoes--he chatters incessantly. I understand only a portion of what he says, but I rarely interrupt: it would only accentuate our differences, I let him ramble until he is short of breath; then ask another question, and he continues. We repeat the process until the morning haze lifts, and the harshness of the summer sun coats the mountains in a shimmering hue of golden green.

"Ya ever fatten a hog?"

"No never." Brownie sits in his newly bottomed chair and reaches for the jug he keeps at his feet. He lifts it to his mouth and takes a long pull, tilting his head so his Adams apple bobbs rhythmically with each swallow. A trickle runs from his chin and into his shirt, soaking it to where it disappears into bibbed overalls. "Not many folks raise hogs in Washington," I say, trying to impress upon Brownie that I know little of rural existence.

Down comes the jug, out comes a gasp; he drinks like a child: with an abandon that leaves him breathless.

"I once raised a hog that weighed out at more'n seven hunnerd fifty. There was so much eatin' meat that it fed thirty some odd men for more'n two months." Brownie rests the jug on his thigh. His eyes become vacuous, and he remains motionless except for the accordian like movements of his thick upper torso. I begin to ask if something is wrong when he raises the jug again.

Brownie is old. I place his age at 80 or more by the stories he tells. But seeing him work in his garden and tote slops to his hog I can't be sure. He limps, and he is short of wind; his hair is bone-white and thinning; his teeth are his own and, except for a missing molar, near perfect; he doesn't smoke drink or chew, and he works a long day before retiring about the time the fireflies swarm in the evening cool. I am apprehensive, though, about his keeling over, afraid he'll be rambling on and have his heart explode, leaving me to administer mouth to mouth resusitation, a thought makes me queasy. For as I keep reminding Brownie, I am city bred. I become giddy over things Brownie thinks routine: cleaning catfish, finding a snake skin in the cellar, disposing of a mouse trapped dead. But for all of our differences Brownie and I get on grandly. Each morning we sit beneath two massive locust trees, drink sassafras, and talk until the earth rotates and protection from the sun is lost.

"Why did you fatten a hog to feed thirty men?" Brownie sits silently, grinning, as though waiting for the punch line to a joke. Again I have failed to realize I speak in complete sentences that confuse rather than clarify for a man like Brownie, who has lived his life without books, television, electricity, plumbing or any of the other devices accredited to the civilization and intellectual uplifting of the human condition. "Were you in the army or something--having to feed thirty men for two months and all?" The grin slides away and the blackness of his lost molar appears. "No, I worked for the railroad--Western Carolina Railway Company--back in twenty-two when they was diggin' through the mountain."

"Diggin', huh?"

"Lord amercy, yes. Bored a hole near a mile long. Worked four year and they was still a-diggin'. That ol' hole was so cursed they was lucky to get shed of it."

"Did you dig, Brownie?"

"Shucks no." He clears his throat and smiles, leans back and hooks a pearly glob over his shoulder; he shifts and the husks of the chair crackle with the weight of his rounded form. He's primed to tell his story.

"They bought in a passel of niggers from the penitentiary. Paid'em a dollar and a half a day. I took care of the livestock and helped with the guardin'. That's when I got that hog to weigh out at more'n seven hunnerd fifty. Jus' 'bout the last hog thought I'd ever fatten it got so bad there for a spell. Western Carolina was payin' good money but I jus' said to myself there was too much devilin' goin' on so I up and quit and went on home. It was alright and fine until that nigger put a curse on that tunnel. Then there was all kinds of trouble. Thirty-three men killed in one month alone. I got shed of that job soon after. Nigger put a curse on that tunnel and everybody that had a thing to do with it. Nigger go to tossin' bones he carried in a sack 'round his neck. Bones he got from his kin when they came cross the water long time agoes."

Brownie reaches for the jug and raises it high. I wait until he finishes. "This fellow, that man... the nigger--did he get those bones from Africa?"

"They come cross the big water where nigger folks lives." Brownie says between gasps and raises the jug again. Brownie says nigger, always--never colored, negro, nigra, or black. It sounds in no way derogatory--unlike the tone used by my uncle the day Martin Luther King was murdered. ("Who in God's name would have thought we'd ever see a bunch of black nigger bastards burn Washington," he said, watching the late news. My aunt, as was her ritual, fondled her rosary and murmurred "Jesu' Marie.") I say black; not out of respect but from accustomed self preservation. Brownie asked me one morning why I said black. "When in Rome do as the Romans do," I said. A small grin raised on his lips; he failed to comprehend. I told him I grew up in a city where blacks outnumbered whites. "My mama told me, Brownie, never to say nigger. She said to always say colored or titsoonia." I told him before he asked. "Titsoonia, Brownie, is an Italian word for dirty." "You don't need worry about sayin' nigger 'round here," said Brownie.

"The closest one lives on Willis Cain's property and if you called him nigger he jus' smile cause he knows he's nigger and knows he aint never gonna be nuthin' but."

Brownie lowers the jug from his face and holds it between spread legs; as he raises his shoulders near ear level he opens his mouth, remaining like this long enough for me to see the few fillings scattered among his bottom teeth. For an instant I fear it is happening, that his heart is exploding. Instead, a belch comes from his face.

"That nigger put a curse on that tunnel cause the Captain done him wrong. Whupped that nigger with a cat-o-nines 'til the meat was peelin' off his back. That nigger didn't let out so much as a whimper. But I seed him when they toted him back to the stockade; his eyes was like fire. Bright as those coals burnin' yonder. Rest of the night I could hear him mumblin'. Weren't no normal nigger talk neither. Sounded like he was prayin' or sumthin'. Could hear those bones clickin' away, then mumblin', then those bones again. Got right spooky after a piece. He kept on with it 'til the sky lightened and it was time to go a-workin'. He was a strange nigger but he was a good 'un too. He was tall, about this fer 'bove your head." Brownie stretches his arm outright and taps his forearm. "And he was rockhard. That nigger--name of Mungo--wore no chains like the others. He was a trusted cause he proved hisself workin' so hard. He worked for me on several occasion--killing hogs, balin' hay, cuttin' wood. That nigger was so powerful I seed him tote a hog carcass that musta weighed three hunnerd. That nigger carried that hog carcass over his head and laid it on his shoulders. Jus' toted it into the smoke house. I was ready to lift that hog in the wagon. But Mungo jus' snatched it up and clumbed the hill to the smoke house. Strange thing about it was as strong as that nigger was he was good natured as a well worked plow house. He was powerful in a way to break bones in any man if he took a mind to it. But I never seed him mean. 'Cept the time the Captain took that cat-o-nine to his hide. Why once a bunch of us was out cuttin' hay and we stopped for dinner. Mungo he dozed away and one of the fellas killed a black snake. Big one. 'Bout long as your leg. Some-one said wouldn't it be a holler to tie that snake 'round the niggers toe cause he heard he 's afeared of getting snake bit. So we got ourselves a piece

twine and tied it 'round the snakes head and tied the other end 'round the niggers big toe real gentle like and we all sit and wait for him to stir. Pretty soon the foreman hollers work time and Mungo he kinda stirred and you could see his eyes open slow like and he put his hands 'neath him and pulled his legs up and Lord amercy. Saw that big ol' black snake hangin' on his toe and he hollered a holler to wake the dead. Lit out of there jumpin' and hollerin', shakin' his foot 'til the twine busted. That nigger started to whimper. But when the snake didn't move he got suspicion. We was all a-laughin' 'til our innerds hurt. So Mungo he got a stick and pushed that snake around 'til he was sure it was stone dead. Then he jus' stood there a-lookin' at us. We stopped howlin' cause we was a-scared he might turn mean. But he jus' walked on back and we seed he was a-smilin'. That nigger Mungo took our trick so fine we let him stack hay the rest of the noon.

Brownie has used his wind by now, and there is a trace of yellow foam in the corners of his mouth. The slack of his overalls fills rythmically with the outthrusts of his thick torso. He sips at the jug, unable to gulp until his breathing slows. After a few swallows he stands and goes to the e kettle, stirs the scummy water with a tree branch, then tosses wood chips on the coals. As he works he shakes his head and chuckles. "Lord amercy that nigger was a funny sight." Returning to his chair he heists the jug to his lips. He puts the jug at his feet and sits with forearms resting on thighs, staring at the mountain ridges beyond. "Ya know, I think I can make that hog weigh out at more'n eight hunnerd if neither of us takes sick. I been a-given it powder too. It's for thin people who wants to put meat on their bones." Brownie is lost within his story.

"How come this nigger Mungo was whipped by the Captain?"

"Nigger saved his life," Brownie says, still engrossed in thoughts about his hog. He turns and I can see the sweat glisten in the creases along his neck. He grins and rocks in his chair, aware I want him to continue. "Yup, that nigger saved the Captain's life and the Captain whupped that nigger good. It came about one mornin' tryin' to bring the niggers cross the Cowee. It had been

rainin' steady for two days and the snows was a-meltin' too. The river was a-swellin' hard, runnin' fast as fast. The niggers, about twenty of 'em, left the stockade chained together hand and foot. There was a chill in the air and you could see heat risin' off the corn bread they was a-carin'. The Captain and Mungo herded them in the boat to get to where they was to work that mornin'. I was tendin' the guide rope on the fer shore. They all piled in that boat and they wasn't a quarter ways cross when the river current caught 'em up and turned 'em plum 'round. Those niggers they got a-scared and a few shifted 'round causin' the boat to go over. Lord amercy, it was a ferocious sight. All those niggers chained together a-yellin' and a-cursin', a-hittin' at the water. The current it sucked 'em away jus' like a commode. Mungo was a trusted and wore no chains. When the boat went over he grabbed ahold of guide rope and held on. Captain he was a-fightin' the current but he was a-goin' under. Mungo let loose of the rope and gathered the Captain in his arms and they was a-carried on down river. Me and some guards that heared the niggers a-howlin' ran on down. And Lord amercy, there they was. That big nigger Mungo a-holdin' the Captain with one arm and a-holdin a rock with the other. The was was a-ragin' over 'em but he held on 'til we could get a rope to 'em. If it was a man less strong that nigger and the Captain would washed to Tennessee. Captain he had a nasty big cut on his head. and they took him off to the infirmary. Mungo and the rest of us went a-searchin' those drown niggers. We come on 'em 'bout two mile down river. They was all strung together like fish on a line, all caught in a felled tree. Lord amercy it was a horrible sight. They was mashed from beatin' agin river rocks. We was a-burin' 'em that evenin' when we heard the commotion. The Captain he was a-whuppin' Mungo with a cat-o-nines. Turns out he found his wallet and money under the niggers' blankets. I reckon that nigger got the Captain's wallet when they was together a-holdin' that river rock. It didn't make no sense to me then and it still don't. Maybe that nigger was jus' a-holdin' that wallet 'til he had time to give it to the Captain personal like. I can't say what really happened and I aint no nigger lover but I say one thing. I wouldn't whupped that

nigger 'count of findin' my wallet in his bunk."

Brownie stands and stretches. Without saying another word he begins filling a bucket with potatoes. The haze has cleared and the shade beneath the locusts is gone. As we walk to the hog pen I ask what happened to the Captain. Brownie says he died shortly threafter, found dead in his bed, an apparent natural death. "Mungo, says Brownie, straining with the weight of the buckets he carries, "I never heared what a-happened to him. Last I knowed he was workin' in the runnel chained like all the rest. I quit and went on home cause there was too much strangeness. Too many men killed dead. That nigger put a curse on that tunnel.

I accompany Brownie on successive trips to the hog pen. He no longer speaks, forced to conserve his strength. I do not offer to help because he will refuse, as he has done always. By the third and final haul Brownie is bent double from the weight of the buckets, the sweat soaks through the denim overalls he wears, and a steady low pitched moan comes from deep inside his chest. Reaching the pen, a box with slatted sides and a roof of tree limbs, Brownie places the buckets on the ground. Unable to straighten from his hunch he moves to another bucket, removes its flannel cloth, and withdraws several handfuls of water. He splashs water into his face, trying to refresh himself in a manner striklingly similar to that of a hog wallowing. Still bent, his head below his waist, he carefully lifts a handful of water and sips it. The hog is grunting, making it known he has finished the last haul of potatoes. "Easy now sweetheart. I'm a-comin'," Brownie says, trying to straighten from his crouch. "Don't get yourself excited now, baby girl. I got more of those tasty taters fer ya." Brownie leans into the pen and watches as though drinking in the new born beauty of an infant in its cradle.

"Yup. Come Thanksgiving I'm goin' ta cut this baby's throat and put her on the scales. Aint no way she gonna weigh out at less than eight hunnerd. It's gotta be cause I done pampered her so much," Brownie says.

Finished with his feeding routine Brownie is ready to retire to his house and wait out the

afternoon heat. He naps for an hour and then prepares supper. Late in the afternoon when the evening breeze begins in ernest he reappears and works in his garden until twilight. Then he begins again the chore of hauling potatoes. He then sits on the front porch, an open Bible in his lap, and watches the soft, sporadic bursts of fireflies. When dark I see his bedroom light flick on, then off. Before full light he will be carrying potatoes to his hog.

Occasionally, I go to town and spend the morning at the public library, reading magazines and back editions of the Washington Post. Before I go I always ask Brownie if I can bring him something. This morning, however, I do not. For as I near the locust trees I see that Brownie is in his chair, asleep, arms hanging at sides, chin on chest. I return in the early afternoon, about the time Brownie is getting ready to tote potatoes. I am anticipating a walk to the hog pen to deliver the bag of rock candy I purchased. Once clear of the curve in the dirt trail I see that Brownie remains under the now shadeless locust trees, positioned as he was hours earlier. Brownie's son, a used car dealer in Raleigh, arrives the next day. Brownie looks queer dressed in a suit and tie. He is buried in the family cemetary near the river. Brownie's boy asks me to look after the place until he can decide what to do with it.

There was little to do, actually. I spent my days as previous. Except there was no one to tell stories while sitting under the locusts. I fed Brownie's hog religiously, frequently taking the effort to see it received an extra feeding. By early November, weeks before butchering, it was a physical impossibility for it to turn around in its pen. I called Willis Cane and said the hog was his if he'd come carry it away. Though I had lost much of my giddiness I could not kill Brownie's hog. Then after returning from town one afternoon, I noticed the hog was gone; all that remained was two spent shells and a patch of darkened dust. I spent more time at the library, though often I would sit beneath the locusts and watch the last vestiges of fall seep from the mountains. It was Christmas when I saw Willis Cane; I stopped him as he pulled a spruce tree behind his tractor.

We made small talk, then he asked about Brownie's son, the Raleigh used car dealer.

"No," I said, "there's been no definite plans. I received one letter asking me to stay on a while longer."

Willis asked if I could come for Christmas dinner. I lied and said I had made plans. He pulled a rag from his pocket and blew his nose, looked into the rag and stuffed it away. "Gotta go. Kids waitin' for the tree."

"Wait Willis. I almost forgot." Blood was pounding at my temple; my voice tinny, a hundred miles away. "How much did that hog weigh out, Willis?" A purplish tint was in his lips and his teeth chattered when he spoke.

"Near eight and a quarter." My head pounded; my mouth tasted of warm rusty pipe; a thin line of perspiration was above my lip.

"What, Willis, what?"

"Said near eight and a quarter. Was a fine lookin' animal. Brownie woulda been proud of ya."

I said nothing, just stood watching the tractor's warm exhaust cloud the air. "You sick you better get yourself on home."

"Yeah, Willis, sure."

"Gotta go, now. Merry Christmas, boy." And he was gone, leaving me beside the road, watching the big spruce grow small in the dim December dusk.

Wendell Curtis

purple horizon

the tender green of grass
        with no absurdity..
wading waist-deep in blue waters
with hearts full, stilted cafe beckoning
with cold beer, tables by the window,
clean white linen, candles--

children jump in noisy splashes
        from the bridge,
and the sun has paused to watch--
down on fortune street, the loneliness
is temporarily forgotten--

then the soft rumble of thoughts
        begins, romantic stillness
broken by the earthen flyer
arriving unannounced--

the sad cafe is closing its doors,
shades drawn, candles blown out--
the bridge is quiet, no
childhood laughter--

out in the water,
the inevitable spirit of thought
creates connections with
circumstance--

Errol Miller

Sleeplessness

Sleeplessness sent me
 into the motionless night
  who greeted me
   with wet kisses on my feet
    and white mist embraced me
     crowning me with moonlit beads
      but with grey-green branches
       locking behind my steps
        loneliness wrestled me and
         filled my heart with
          mercury

          But
          The stroke of three

called me back
 to the ticking of the clock--
  monotony broken by occasional night coughs.

Ginger Leigh Wright

From the Thirty-Fourth Floor: Eastside, Manhattan

At this height one expects to see
messages, blinked out by street lights;
Only, too far to focus
a billboard gestures neon:
RED green, GREEN red.
Not the sign of arrival looked for.

One wants to see the bowl of earth
curved round to an horizon.
But the line between boulevarded light
and cold night sky is a madman's wail; flat, thin.
If there were silence,
the cabs below might move as sharks in deep water,
the grace added by glass.
Instead, from the street, the shouts of men rise
undiminished by distance.

In twos the night strollers pass
enroute to arrival.

Sam McMillan

Les Visages

Faces on mountains, lairs in time
Peasant grass in flowing revolt
  of Trojan beliefs,
  ruling as their fathers,
  passing to continuity.

Wings of angels singed in
  rainy fog of banishment.
Purple moons reflect souls
  who worship Id...
  the ancestral god.

Descendant souls vacate their golden chairs,
  melting,
  as the sun rafts on
  oceans of blue slime.

A soul must die so the mind may live,
Ceasar was a good man, longing
  to fly a biplane of albatross and lizards
  to an invisible point of being one's self,
  then to crash in timeless depths of hellish apathy.

Gone to infinity, are they all,
  over a bridge built of careless ideas
  and blind obedience,
  festered as an ageless blister,
  bursting,
  oozing out reality.

Tom Hutchins

Independent's Day

CheerfulCharlie,
Come celebrate the calends of July.
Hallowed heritage held high
Sounds reveille for rollicking revelry.

The swinging generation, gone too far,
Youth exuberant, fear-driven,
(A juvenile head shrinker opines)
Unchecked by parental reins,
Running rioutiously rampant,
Tramples underfoot our legacy-
Freedom, Liberty, Independence

For such as these our forefathers
Staunchly stood at Bunker Hill.
Liberty, Freedom, Independence,
Bought with sacred cost,
Meaningless grow for citizens
Who value not their worth,
Nor seem to care
That each day
Enfolds them more tightly
In a cocoon of security,
Silvery cords, soul soothing,
Stealing with slow strangulation
Man's freedom of choice

Revere-known from house to house,
Now doubles in kitchen brass;
Hancock-guarantor against tyranny,
Now insures life and limb.
Liberty, once revered,
Puts on the false mask of license,
Caring only for selfish ends.
Freedom fronts for the right
To reject the law of the land.
Furl the flag flown fondly
By courageous men of valorous deeds.
Today red stands for blushing shame
Contrasted with melancholy blues,
Alongside white-striped fear.

In the calm stillness of eventide
The hearth no longer murmurs
With quiet conversation:
Hurry home, hasten away,
Same old routine, day by day.
Smoke-filled work now filed away,
Fume filled streets stand in the way.
Home at last, now leisurely
Race through your bath-
Guests invited you must see.
Eat, drink and bid them fond adieu.
Relax once more the "tube" to view.
Rape, murder, gory crimes galore,
Fill up your mind with treasured store.

Your company, Charlie, pleasure sweet,
'Tis all we ask (what a treat).
In pensive mood we'll meditate,
Our hallowed heritage contemplate.
Rustic, plain, courageous, hearty
Forefathers fought for freedom's right.
So, simply in outdoor setting,
We'll celebrate the old-time way,
If only, Charlie,
The electric current lasts all day.

P. A. Cline, Jr.

dorian grey

the wind from alura
is from some other life,
some other rented escapade
from the seashore,
giggles and laughter,
screech of birds
that hop, that hop--

then the interim period
is filled with strangeness,
burden of culture,
robes that mean nothing--

i bend and weep
with the words
that are heaped upon me
and swear that tomorrow,
tomorrow, i will go
to the cathedral alone
and simply feel of its
sturdy grey stone walls.

Errol Miller

The Face In The Mirror

Who are you?

Oh yes, we talked once upon a time
and walked together.

You told me of the line and rhyme
of things,

And smiled at the tissue paper world.

Your feet were firmly planted
and your way well mapped.

You are the one, are you not?

Perhaps, no . . .
The line of your brow - -

She was always so sure;
You are not sure.

She smiled - -
Your eyes are blurred,
their light is gone.

I do not know you.

But since she is gone,
the one I knew well,

Perhaps you will walk with me a ways
so that I will not be
alone.

Anne Swann

Sideshow

I shuffle stagefront,
Open-toed Roman sandals digging up
Clumps of matted sawdust and poptops,
To claim a front row seat.
The Human Pin Cushion kills his king-sized Schlitz
And casually saunters on,
   estimating the crowd and take,
He ballyhoos, waving his wares about:
   the tapered pins
Gleam in the dingy lights.
The needles shine.
He says he was once a fire-eater, too,
But he had to quit. It gave him heartburn.
Using his Adam's apple for his X,
He stretches the loose throat skin out,
Stabbing two needles through to make
An abstract bowtie. Sticky blood trails
Down his naked chest. Blood never fails to impress.
Two drunks stagger noisily
   out before his routine is through.
Cheerily, he gives them the finger and winks.
We get the point.

Virginia L. Rudder

Beyond the Yellow Brick Road

I
Walking up the yellow apple,
the grey-handed man
with the folded turnip briefcase
glanced briefly into his quarter
and smiled. It was a good smile,

II
polished like the inside
of a book-length giraffe.
Life is just one advanced species
after another, he said,
as he consulted his wristbone.

III
It was a delightful wristbone,
held to surface by reflex action.
Deliver us from evil, he spat,
as the green-blossom scent
of the money-trees in Spring

IV
lengthened into his episodic
awareness. Polished like the obverse
of a nationally syndicated sorrow.
It was a wistful sorrow, never quite knowing
whether to calculate or whether to
devour the sidesaddle pizza

Amon Liner

Gardner Webb College Library

The World and Mother Cats

The world is cruel to mother cats
Who must survive on birds and rats
   and whatever they can catch
   to feed their young.
When they're attacked by a larger beast
   must run or climb a tree
And if the young don't make it
   All the mother can do is sit in safety
   in her lofty place and watch the massacre.

E. M. Blankenship

How Do You Tell A Man . . .

The problem, in the first place, was to get Will off the couch. We might as well forget the whole thing unless we could somehow persuade him to abandon those sagging brown cushions with the zippers grinning defiantly outward and go to Wesley's funeral. And Will was, after all, Wesley's brother-in-law, and it would be just like him to let the matter slip by conveniently; for that was Will's way, and we knew him too well to assume that unprodded he would get in the car and go with Francine, Julie, and Stanley to pay his last respects.

So I stood over the couch and tried to talk him up. But he just lay there with open mouth, toothless gums twisting, lips working sporadically in a mock-eating exercise as he slumbered on. Beads of sweat hung precariously from his forehead threatening to descend, the suffocating heat of the wood-burning stove no deterrent to his rest. It was always like this. Will, who never slept in a bed, saying, "I can sleep better here than anywhere else," lying there in his sleeveless undershirt, arms crossed over his cheeks, nose sticking out like that of some boar trying to get through a fence. Will, legs jackknifed, ears impervious to all supplications, bedfellow of Morpheus--safe in his sanctuary. Waking him by shouting, imploring, or threatening was always futile. He, working nights in a bakery and escaping to the couch most of his other hours, turning on the television and falling off to the throbbing organ of soap operas.

So it was Christmas and we were back again. And the farm--no, not even a farm now--looked even worse than before. The acres of fields were uncut, the deserted oil drums lay corroding, the trash was piled higher. Only four years before, Will had finally realized his dream of a pig parlor--sixteen thousand dollars for a swine heaven with automatic feeders, high pressure hoses, and drainage lakes. Now, virtually forgotten, the parlor housed seven scrawny sows and a few piglets that squirmed in and out the gate, little mistakes refusing to go away. He had sold his boar and since then had paid the others no mind, filling the feeders only enough to keep them alive. "I ain't got time to mess with it," he claimed. But the mortgage would not go away, and after months of nagging Francine got him to sell twelve of his sixty-six acres, and the forsaken pig place was finally debt free. It now sat in gloriously amidst the weeds and mud, a monument to Will's fleeting enthusiasm for creativity or industry or whatever he intended it to be. And what he intended was to make one thousand dollars a month selling hogs, get out of the bakery, and do as he pleased--as if that had ever been a problem for him...Francine will tell you that.

Two days before Christmas, Will could wait no longer to get her present off his mind, wheeling in the dishwasher on his hand truck and planting it majestically on the kitchen floor as Francine sat there, expression unchanged, portrait in ambivalence. I knew right away why she did not seem overjoyed, for Francine knew that Will's Christmas presents were more often a balmfor his conscience, an attempt to redeem the year in a few minutes. And she sat there, doubtless remembering the stereo he had bought her, that expensive console on which she had had to finish the payments because he had let them go. And though the dishwasher was nice, she told me later, she needed the new oven and range more. The door of the old oven now hung loose like a tailgate with a broken chain, and two of her burners sagged cold and disconnected above their foil bowls. But Will never considered what was essential. For him, value was based on cost, even if what he got her was impractical. Just like the pig parlor which he abandoned, unable to both raise hogs and work nights in the bakery. Just like the farm implements he bought and then forsook to the elements. Just like the stereo. Just like the dishwasher.

So Francine had given up and started working in the plant, resigning herself to the irrational, leaving herself time for only a modicum of housekeeping. But at least she had some money of her own, and that gave her a kind of independence from Will. And he? He had the couch, and that symbol of his insensitivity coupled with the silence of her shattered pride annulled what vestiges of communication there remained.

Then there was the matter of fruitcakes. It was always the same around Christmas. He'd buy several cakes at the bakery discounted or even free many times--and get me to drive him all over Vernon, six miles from the farm, to bestow his holiday cheer. This time he waited until Christmas day, dragging me away from the children. So we got in the car and I pointed it down the drive, through a drizzle, maneuvering to miss Will's dead bitch that had flaunted fate once too often in the blackish road fronting the house. By now I knew the route by heart. He'd take cakes to his banker, to the man he bought feed from, to the owner of the farm supply store. And this year he had me drive out in the country where he gave one to the man who owned the catfish lake.

"Why are you giving him one?" I asked.

"Because he lets me fish when I want as much as I want," he replied, terminating the matter.

Then, finally, we took the fifth of Wild Turkey out to his boss man.

About the third stop, Will got impatient with the seat belt I kept reminding him to fasten. "You got to lock it or the buzzer will sound," I tried to explain.

"Damn thing," he fumed.

"Watch your language," I retorted. "It's Christmas. Besides, next time you buy a new car you'll have to fasten the belt or the car won't start at all."

"Then I'll get me an old one," he concluded.

Of course there was never any use arguing with Will, as I had long ago learned. "I ain't never got hurt in no wreck," he claimed. Don't dare tempt death by acknowledging its presence, he might well have said. Keep away. Keep your distance and perhaps this bit of unpleasantness won't bother you any more than maintaining order

on the Christmas presents or visiting a dying brother-in-law.

Actually, it wasn't all that hard to get along with Will, provided you knew how. You could say almost anything you wanted and he wouldn't be offended. I had maintained mostly a joking relationship with him, that being the best defense against intimacy. But even harsh words meant nothing to the man, for he had little concept of his own faults, having instead a morality--unstated and probably even uncomprehended--that whatever served his own interests was right. And no one could get by this barrier of Will's reality. So he got back in the car after one of our stops and finally got it out. "You going to Wesley's funeral?"

He was quiet for two blocks and then moved his toothless mouth. "I never even went to see him. He wouldn't have lived any longer if I'd gone over there."

I thought, "How can you understand a man who'd run all over town to deliver fruit cakes to people he knew only in some business capacity and not for two years drive forty miles to visit his dying sister's husband? " Perhaps time didn't exist for him--he, impervious to change, living in some vacuous, self-created reality void of illusion.

When Wesley died on Christmas eve, Francine surprised me by deciding to try once more. Eyes flickering with the old hopeful determination, she affirmed through tight lips, "Maybe if he has a nice hat and we don't let him fall asleep on the couch, he'll go." So I got the hat and we had it ready the day after Christmas when Wesley was to be buried. That afternoon, Stanley was to come and drive them over in my car while I stayed with the children.

But Will was on the couch anyway, his porcine recumbency impenetrable to all supplications. So I stood there, wondering how to tell a sixty-three year old man to get off the couch and attend his brother-in-law's funeral.

"Come on, Will," I shouted. "They're ready to go." And, vexed when that didn't work, "Stanley's here. Let's have some coffee. You hear me? Stanley wants to have some coffee with you."

Suddenly, startling me, he swung his white stockinged feet loudly to the floor, rubbed a hand against his wizened cheek and limped to the table. Pressing my advantage, I followed. "Hey, we've got you a new hat to wear, Will. Francine had me buy it for you at Crossleys."

But he fought the idea, as I knew he would. "I don't never wear no hat," he snorted.

"She spent eleven dollars for it," I replied, playing my trump.

Will meditated a minute and finally mumbled, as a final resort, "I ain't gonna wear nothing without a feather in it." So I produced the hat with its red and black plumage in the headband, and he was stuck.

We had him then. I watched a few minutes later as Will came out in his only suit, black with narrow lapels, wearing my wide blue and red tie, weathered work shoes clomping. As they went out the door he perched the Resistol self-conforming, blue-checked hat incongruously on his balding head. Reaching the car, he demanded to ride in the back, safely removed from my seat-belt buzzer, free. As the out backed out, I fancied that Francine gave me a slight smile.

Sometimes, I suppose, a man has to put on a new hat, get out his one suit, twist on a tie, and do his duty. Sometimes even men like Will suffer a twinge of conscience. I knew, though, as Francine had long known, that for every time like this there would be a hundred quite the opposite. For how often could we expect Will to respond to something he had not initiated himself.

When they got back it was dark, and I had the light on in the carport. The motherless puppy began dancing around, yipping at the Dodge as it eased to a stop, the engine subsiding to a drone and then quitting. Will came in first, hindered by the friendly pup, losing patience and pushing it aside with his foot. He jerked the torn screen door open and let it slam back. "How you doin', boy?" he rasped, not looking at me.

I saw him place the hat on top of Francine's sewing stuff and head for the bedroom, reappearing moments later in white bakery pants and undershirt. He flipped on the television and sprawled on the couch, shading his eyes from the overhead light with an outstretched arm.

So everything was normal. I knew that the hat would stay exactly where it was until Francine had to sew, and then sit where she put it until somebody else died. At least we got him to the funeral. Now he could go back to sleeping, fishing, and ignoring the rest of civilization. Christmas

and the dead had ceased to bother him for another year.

Francine was in the living room putting on some records. I heard Tennessee Ernie groaning "Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing..." and decided to stay in the den with Will, who was dead asleep, and watch Banacek.

Yes, we did get him to the funeral. Will had for a few hours joined the human race, sampled its life, and declared a contrary preference. But give him credit for putting on that self-conforming, eleven-dollar hat long enough to do his duty. But before the hat would ever get much use, I'm afraid a few more people would have to cooperate by dying.

Yes, Will did his duty. I suppose.

Jim Taylor

The Maverick and the Crowd

Why should a Maverick, one who doesn't agree
Be dealt with so harshly by his fellows?
Why is he so deadly dangerous?
Maybe it's because all the others are so ready
And willing to follow a fellow like that?
Maybe it's not to punish the fellow
But just a safety measure for themselves
To make sure that they will not be led astray.
The man who has erred is not to be feared
For the danger he himself imposes.
But the power he exerts to draw weak souls
Is enough to make the whole congregation tremble.
So kick him out! Give him the boot!
The group is not strong enough to withstand
The firm resolution of a single man.
Expulsion comes not for the sake of evil in a man
But for the sake of weakness in the crowd.

E. M. Blankenship

Night Ride

I fly down a perfect tunnel
Of darkness. Speed exists
Only in my mind
As an abstract quality of matter
Unobserved as yet by man

My car violates the virgin darkness.
In one long thrust,
It ruptures the hymenal wall
Before me.
The soft folds close instantly
Behind me.
I must not stop the rape.

I am in my womb.
The uterus confines me as I
Hurtle down a dark highway
Infinite blackness surrounds.
My car lights push
The black foam darkness off the road,
Piling it up along the side
There, it acts as a wall
Of grass, six inches high,
A light year deep.

The darkness never screams
Or shudders. It yields, it resists.
It is severed, it is never parted.
I arrive, having known darkness.

Gary Lineburger

The Memory in the Wine

You are pouring a man
into this glass;
a haggard man
wandering the house
in his underwear,
arguing with fictional opponents.
The globe is never full,
not even half full--
half empty, according to him as he pours
and pours
and you pour.

He is thinning
in his own wake,
floating face up
on the livingroom floor,
smiling senselessly,
sweating, muttering

and I am explaining to dates,
who have walked me to my door,
Why
an old man sleeps
in his underwear
in the middle of the floor
I am covering him with an afghan
covering
covering for.

As you pour.

Jonellen Heckler

Living in Two Worlds

The man who picks up garbage
in my little town
grows exquisite orchids.

All day he hoists the heavy cans,
pouring smelly contents
into the big trucks waiting maw,
fish and chicken entrails aged
for several days,
coffee grounds, beer cans, and dog dung,
and other ordinary refuse.

I see him trudging homeward
at the close of his long day,
and he slips into the little greenhouse
he constructed with his own hands,
stands quietly among his plants,
and then moves to them one by one
with individual touch,
communication, admiration.

Breathing deeply, sucks in beauty
and a growing sense of pride
that will linger through tomorrow
and its clanging cans and stench

T. M. Linnens

She Dreams

"'Night, my kitten, 'night.
The town is buttoned up tight.
The moon is as bright as
A coal miner's light.
So 'night, my kitten, 'night."

"Sleep, my darling, sleep.
The clock on the mantel is deep.
The leaves are cheap
Where the cold winds creep.
So sleep, my darling, sleep."

She dreams, my precious dreams
That things aren't as bad as they seem.
That missles don't gleam
Or toddlers scream.
She dreams, my precious dreams.

"Dawn, my child woman, dawn.
Spiders have tented the lawn.
The night doe has gone
To shelter her fawn.
Dawn, my child woman, dawn."

Neil Furr

The Pioneers

In Kernersville North Carolina
where the nights are cool in early
May and the Scottish Inn rests
heavy under concrete skies and
silent shadow, and the people sleep
without a sound inside cardboard-
covered walls, secure and snug against
whatever boredom fogs the
brains of those who blaze a trail of
plastic through America

Bruce Van Blarcom

H'erer I Gleam

the slow sterile disk of wax
goes round and round
softly glazing your eyes and
numbing your mind with
cold blue death, turning
from somewhere beyond your concentration
in the amber mist of conversation
to fear-fogged words of self-pity
steeped in the antiphony
of drunken sympathy

and a madman is pulling the strings

marvelling at the spinning insanity
and speckled soundings of your brain
you taste your mouth for traces of smile
and finding none
wonder what you were looking for, beyond
the rhythm of wanting that
squirms in purple lust through crevices
you cannot conceal

and nothing else

a silent trill of wasted talk
invades the frozen stutter of your eye, urged
and spent with somber ease as
days that pass and nights that
slip through days that pass
and thought that turns and squeaks with hope,
pale with deadened air
slow and sterile, round and round
the disk of life

a song unheard

Bruce Van Blarcom

A Giggin'

Barefeet, stub-toed, dirty-faced
awed,
swinging on an old rope across
what seemed caverns, then.
Clearing the gap between boy and man

I search him out, the track of
a dirty foot tells me that he's here
In the marsh, through smokey moss
I see him there; knee-wading

Cuffs turned up, gig in hand,
toes buried in cool ooze;
learning patience.

Often I see him there, but,
dare not speak to break
the quiet,
dreading dusk
dreading dusk

Tom Philbeck

Death Delayed

I might just die, they will notice then.
It's a great deal of trouble you know
digging a grave and all.

Or I might prolong that event by staying alive
longer

Then when I go they will all be older and easier
upset and taxed by weariness.

Then my going will cause a greater effect
in the stir.
I don't enjoy living any longer, but what difference
does that make?
In the long haul it's the ripples set in motion
And the force behind them that really count.
After all I can make it through long periods
under sedation
If only, by any means possible, I can get the pack
to act in a humane manner, not that it
really matters.
One only lives once even if it is forever.
Even though the better part of everything is past,
I still have considerable force of mind and will
which, on second thought, I do not intend to
surrender easily
I've influenced the lives of a great many.
With any luck I may be quite effective
still
Stirring up the ripples may be almost as
effortless as dying.
The miracle workers say I should already be dead,
"Should be" may be rather strong,
But I say it like I see it.
People never have liked that.
I have no need to polish apples now.
I do whatever I think or want or can
I have fewer inhibitions and am much more free.
I'm more myself than I've ever been.
Men say that women are good at hanging on.
Well, I'll just likely set a record and show them
how the hanging goes.

E. M. Blankenship

Eight Days
By: Mother Earth

My blessings on thee, Little Dan,
   Uniformed in warfare's drab tan.
Lay aside thy boots and sword-gun
   To walk with me while morning's young.
Hep - 2 - 3 - 4 Hep - 2 - 3 - 4
We'll stroll here in my garden hued
   Of proud-full heads with morn still dewed;
And you shall meet my loved ones tall,
   I'll introduce you to them all.
Hep - 2 - 3 - 4 Hep - 2 - 3 - 4

This one's your Dad - that one is his -
   And his - and his; and cousins these;
All equal here, the space they share.
   There's Uncle Det; Great-Uncle Ware.
Hep - 2 - 3 - 4 Hep - 2 - 3 - 4
They stand here 'lone, blood-red, fire-orange,
   Death-white, true-blue; all colors range.
Poor dears were soldiers once like you;
   Handsome, life-full, and joy-full, too.
Hep - 2 - 3 - 4 Hep - 2 - 3 - 4

The sun has inched, we must walk fast;
   Time's a mirage; life soon is past.
Now, you're to pick where you will bloom -
   Yes, love! You'll join them ere 'tis noon.
Hep - 2 - 3 - 4 Hep - 2 !

And the morning.
   And the evening,
      Were the eighth day.

R. Rountree

I planted flowers in a garden freshly plowed
And weeds sprung up
To mock my effort
And to cut down my ego.
A few good plants managed to survive
And since I was commanded to let them
    all grow up together
I did, but you should see what a jungle
    my garden is

E. M. Blankenship

Blue Walnuts

Maggie's gettin' old, but she still
washes for us on Tuesdays.
I guess she's been washin' for us
near 'bout forever 'cause I'm eight.
I watch her fill up the tin tubs
with water. We got a good wash place
under the walnut tree. Sometimes I put
chips on the fire burnin' under the
black pot. That's where Maggie boils the
mud out of mine and Bennie's drawers.

Mama told her she guessed if it wasn't
for her she'd wish we didn't have a creek.
Maggie said long as she done the boilin', let us be.
I like to see her dip Papa's long drawers up and down
on her washstick, they look so funny.
Mama said Maggie shouldn't hang our private
wash pieces on Miss Anton's side. I can't see
why Mama cares for Miss Anton seein' our underwear.

I like the blue tub of water best. Maggie makes it
that way with a blue stick tied up in a rag.
All week she leaves it on the limb over the tub.
Mama said she wouldn't be surprised if someday
we had blue walnuts

Helen Cornwell Logan

THE OBITUARIES

Well, Ruby, today I read the obituaries for you.
You (and Grandma and Grandpa) couldn't read them, having
been them.

Your old absorption in mortality puzzled us:
we recoiled at such easy commingling with the dead.
It was as though, amoug them, you moved too easily, looking
on sad, still faces, morbidly drawn.
We did not know you were clocking your own remaining distance,
nor did we understand your requiem.

Infancy, mate, children, accomplishments, the last
fine (or wretched) fight--all these
you recalled with a word or look.
Whole periods you spent thus; soon the check was daily.
Incredibly, you left our world for theirs.

Yes, Ruby, today I read the obituaries for you...
An act of love, like putting flowers on a grave.
Read every word and didn't know a person, our only bond
being the city we both once lived in
and a little mortality on both our records.

I confess, though, that a name or so gave me a catch:
Kusterer (to whom our present in-laws cannot be related),
Daugherty (your stories of old Mrs. Daugherty rolled back
and I wondered if she that died had been your jolly
landlady that, unlike her roomer, had made it to ninety-
five);
and Nelson, that caused me to be stabbed by a neighbor's
propensity for Anagram and Christian Science, who faked
her illness and whose husband approached you once because
you were so lovely.

Yes, Ruby, today I read the obituaries for you,
since you are now the other side of pain,
and the life that once lay so quickly quieted
in black
beneath your philosophic eye
is as past for you as for them.

Yes, Ruby, today I read the obituaries for you,
so do not think the passing world goes unattended.
There, in the plain at Charlottesville, lie loved,
and meet them coming home,
duly pondered.

B. Cox

Energy

While it was alive and among us,
We marvelled at its feverish activity:
Prodigious motions against
Insurmountable obstacles.

Often, when the fever had subsided somewhat,
We huddled, we murmured and chanted--
Our fear and awe temporarily relieved--
Offering hopeless remedies,
Knowing the fear would return,
The awe would stiffle.

The night it died, we crept cautiously forward,
Almost touching
Shrinking backward
Clutching at our clothes or throats.
Somebody turned it over.

Inside, it was and and been sodden and decayed.
Microcosmic illusion cosmic dismay.
Quietly we slid away.

William B. Stowe

Michael's Sister

As mother pulled the car out of the drive she waved and shouted, "Watch Cindy!"

Michael nodded, and forcing excitement into his voice, read, "What was his surprise and joy when he saw that he was no longer a marionette, but that he had," and he watched Cindy's face, "become a real live boy!" Cindy's eys, blank, blinked like a tilted doll's and Michael slammed the book closed. Oh well, he thought, if she wasn't impressed when Pinocchio escaped from the shark's belly, why should she be when he goes from wood to real?

He glanced at his watch, then leaned forward in the swing so he could see the street between the porch railings. "Your bus is two minutes late," he said irritably. "Sa-wing?" Cindy asked and Michael stuck his feet out and pulled against the air. Beside him, sitting cross-legged, Cindy laughed and rocked.

Suddenly, from across the street voices called, "Dumb bum! Hey, duuumb buuum!" and Michael kicked so hard that the swing jolted, jarring his elbow against the chain support. Cindy stared at Michael and he grinned as if she'd said, "Say cheese."

Her head rotated on her shoulders as she uncrossed her legs, then she jumped up and shrieked, "Goddamn-hell-god--"

"Hush, Cindy!" Michael hissed and yanked her

backwards. She strained against his grip, muttering loudly, but Michael knew that curses were better than popping off buttons and prancing around outside in her panties and bra, which she did once while the voices taunted hysterically. And afterwards Michael, humiliated, listened to Daddy inform him that he--Michael--would have to be extra careful to "protect Cindy from herself."

Michael held onto Cindy until the bus drove up. "Michael-ike," she said, stuffing something into his pocket as he helped her climb aboard. When he waved goodbye to her he heard faraway, mocking laughter and he stomped down the sidewalk toward his own school. So I do watch. And listen, don't I? he asked himself. All the goddamn-hell time!

Michael shifted his books and his shirt rustled. He reached into his pocket and pulled out irregular triangles of paper--"paper dolls," rather, which Cindy created for him by the trashbasketful. Children ran past him, elbowing each other, laughing their way to the school building. Michael skipped once and smiled; today was the day. Today he wouldn't worry about Cindy or scraps of paper or voices--if only Mrs. Wilson didn't forget.

"Of the sixty books, Michael, which was your favorite?"

Michael stared at the award Mrs. Wilson handed him; he couldn't remember a single story. He blinked and looded past his twittering classmates, to the back row where his desk, empty except for--"P-Pinocchio," Michael sputtered, "because he started out a dumb puppet and ended up a real person."

Mrs. Wilson led the applause as Michael crept shakily down the aisle. "Dumb puppet," someone repeated and the room filled with snickers and hoots. He dived for his desk and crammed the book into the drawer. Then he sat, head ducked, and examined the award as if counting every speck of glitter which surrounded the golden words: I'M A BOOKWORM and MICHAEL DIXON.

The swimming badge, or the Field Day ribbons. Were those better? Probably not, yet Mom made brownies both times. He fidgeted in his seat. When the bell rang he scrambled past people in the hall and schoolyard and didn't stop running until he reached his front door. "Where's everybody?" he

called breathlessly.

"Upstairs, Michael," his mother shouted and he took the steps two at a time. Mother and Cindy sat in the middle of Cindy's floor, surrounded by tiny houses filled with furniture and dolls.

"Look, Mom!" His stomach lurched when their faces turned upward. He waved the award as if he were on top a ferris wheel looking down on Giants in Joyland. Cindy pointed at the paper and he winked at her; did she, after all understand the connection between the books he read to her and this fancy award?

"Great, Michael! Cindy has a surprise for you, too."

"What?" he asked politely, although it had to be a cake. But neither stood; instead Cindy untied her scuffed shoes and took them off. Maybe she wanted him to polish them, he thought and rolled his eyes toward the ceiling. Then very slowly she put the right shoe on again. Her fingers, unbending, tied a knot and made a big loop, but as she pushed the second loop through, the strings dropped like two pieces of spaghetti.

Cindy looked up at Michael and shook her head. She rubbed her hands together, tugged at each finger, clawed the air and started again. Hushed silence, a lopsides bow, and Mother clapped thunderously while Cindy, like a mixed Cheerful-Tearful doll, had her giggles and sobs going at the same time.

"Is that so special?" He wanted to add, for somebody as old as Cindy. But Mother was grinning as it it were...very special, better even than reading sixty books!

"Tell us about your a--" Mother began and Michael flung the award at her head.

As it hit her in the chin, he yelled, "Shut up, just shut up!" Down the stairs he ran, out the back door, to the tree at the far end of the yard and stopped finally at the skinniest top branch which swayed so the tiny grave below seemed to jump from side to side, like the kitten tossing yarn. Michael squeezed his eyes shut and gritted his teeth.

Whenever he thought about the kitten he hated Cindy because she hugged it as if it were a doll, until it stopped crying--until it died--before Michael could stop her. Then while Daddy dug the

grave Michael dressed his teddy bear in Cindy's hat and blouse. "Stupid, idiot, dumb, dumb!" He yelled and pounded until Teddy exploded like popcorn, but later he cried because Teddy was gone too.

Trying to make him forget, Daddy said, "Let's go for hamburgers," but Cindy had ruined that, too. She cried for one of the hats the restaurant gave out to babies. "Stupid," Michael muttered when the waitress fitted Cindy and tried to put one on him. Mother watched, tears falling into her french fries. "I'm sorry, Michael," she said.

Michael wanted to tell everybody he was fed up with their saying, "I'm sorry Michael." Bleagh! "I'm sorry, Michael, but Cindy has to go to the doctor tomorrow; maybe you can play basketball next week. I'm sorry, Michael, you can't have the bike for Christmas because Cindy's medicine just costs too much. I'm sorry Michael, you have to hold Cindy's hand when you walk down the steps; she might fall and hurt her head. I'm sorry Michael, Cindy can't sleep because medicine's not working. Ignore her.

"Mi-chael?" Ignore her? No way!

"Mi-chael?" Pretend she's not there--on the back steps cutting paper scraps--that's all! Michael closed his eyes and turned around with his backbone against the branch, but masked robbers sneaked up and tied his hands behind him. They danced and dangled the sparkling award before his face. "Na, na, na!" they sang to the rhythm of running footsteps.

"Michael!" He opened his eyes and the robbers vanished.

You can't get away with this.

"Michael!"

Someday you'll be sorry!

"Michael, I'm going to make chocolate cake, but you have to watch Cindy for me."

He rolled over. Mother stood below and he suspected that she'd been crying, but her hand shaded her eyes so he couldn't tell. "Will you make extra icing so I can have all I want?"

"With whipping cream."

"Aw, all right." About half way down he had an impulse to jump and land right at her feet. Would she cry when he writhed with pain the way she cried every time Cindy tripped over her own feet?

"Thank you, Michael, Mother said and he decided not to jump; anybody deserved better last words than thank you.

"You want to swing?" he asked Cindy grudgingly and she nodded. "O.K. you have to stay on the porch." She continued to nod. "And stop nodding." She scooped up the paper scraps and stuck them in her pocket. He grabbed her hand and pulled her along, around the house, until she stopped at the rose bushes, throwing him off balance. "Drat it, Cindy!" he scolded.

Picking roses, she said, "One Mi-chael. Two Cindy."

"That's good!" Michael praised automatically as he took the flower and put it in his buttonhole, and as he had so many times before, he wondered how Cindy could be happy to count to two. Did she not know there were other numbers?

He helped her up the steps and into the swing where she put her knees up and hung her heels on the edge of the seat. He pumped and she laughed joyfully as they rode higher and higher. The same as he used to play hide-and-seek for hours without getting bored, he believed that Cindy could swing for the rest of her life.

"Dumb puppet! Duumb pup-pet!" came rude, echoing voices.

"Goddamn-hell! And hell again and again. Michael closed his eyes against the tears, but opened them quickly when Cindy slammed her feet on the porch. "Let's go play dolls!" he lilted and she stood as if ready to follow him anywhere. "Cin--" he began, but she pushed him backwards so hard he bit his tongue. He cupped his chin and groaned.

"Dumb puppet! Hey you!"

Cindy scuttled across the porch. At the steps she stopped and waved frantically. Here she goes! Michael thought. But she plopped down on the top step, took off both shoes and alternately kicked each leg high, like a dancer.

There were hoots and snickers, followed by, "Yeah! Dumb puppet!" Michael stood, ready to drag Cindy into the house if she popped buttons. To his surprise, though, she put on her right shoe and slowly tied a perfect bow. When she kicked her leg again there were more hoots, and she crammed her foot into the other shoe, unfolding herself.

"No dumb bum!" she shouted, standing more elegantly erect than Michael had ever seen her. Then she bent from the waist and tied the strings. Michael let go his chin and clapped. Cindy

straightened, and turning to him as if she suddenly remembered something important, dug the scraps from her pocket. "Pretty doll. Michael-ike." She smiled and thrust the triangles toward him. His stomach lurched when he saw the golden words leap from the shiny background: I'M A...MICHAEL.

He swallowed. Blood. His tongue throbbed painfully. "Oooooow," he groaned.

"Hey, dumb puppet!"

Cindy's smile faded. She frowned. Michael pointed to Cindy's shoes, nodding approvingly, then to the triangles. "Very pretty dolls, Cindy. I like them. Thank you," he said. He took Cindy's hand and raised their arms above his head. "Go away!" he roared, then to the silence he roared again, "Go away!"

Beth Graham

Bicentennial Blues

i am not a lover of the south
where bumper stickers insult my humanity
and the heavy air insults my nostrils
and the drawling accents irritate my ears
and confederate flags have not been lowered
and white supremacy is the number one health hazard
oh give me back my mad new york
where the wounded nod in doorways
and the sick stagger in the naked light
and city hall is falling down
and the air is even raunchier
but whose concrete heels still click stubbornly
against the sky
oh pluck me up by my afro
out of this genteel but deadly weather
throw me kicking and screaming into the maelstrom

part of me has never left it
not that i love new york or any portion
of a country never mine nor meant to be
except as it needed my labor and my blood
but i seem to need the city's special danger
more crushing and hypocritical
how else shall i make poems
how else live but under the sword of insanity
and oh god not your agrarian hick variety
brownbagging church-on-every-corner
white as heroin middleclass sickness
don't lay that freak number on my song (ma)

another action in my head
unspeakable in this square region of hell
some wild white woman's mouth devours me
i snuggle between her alabaster globes
front and rear inhaling the perfume of life
and the stink of excrement dying with pleasure

ah ha your constant suspicions confirmed
your scarlet o'haras in imminent danger
yes yes yes i confess it
my horny desires kept secret all these centuries
while you ravished black women at your whims
speak our cesaire fanon cleaver admit it williams
wright and baldwin let the nigger be honest and human
and not a creature of pious stone
oh yes this cannibalistic lover
this dubious ecstasy
this american dilemma
fills all the spaces between the lines
all the unwritten poems
gluttons the brain
explodes from the ears
stains the thickness of my angry lips
i spit it back in your racist startled faces
a gesture of conscience and liberation

empty now i don't vomit anymore
but myths pale nightmares haunt me
realities of sordid deaths and mangles lives
hysterical voices screaming the star-spangled banner
or dixie as i pivot to face another desperate year
stitching together the fabric of my own revolution
civil war broiling in my soul
i grope onward fighting the urge to sleep
it is not yet time for peace
or rocking contented before the television screen
or mindless saluting of flags
or being immobilized by the machines of oppression
it is time for gathering courage together
for the best ideals and hopes to rise in the winter light
and go outward among bleak stones and mournful sounds of rain

Ashanti

Upon a Lonely Hill

Upon a lonely hill a great stone fortress
stands like a great, black monolith-
an obstacle in the path of the ages-
a silent sentry with pointed bayonette

The ghost of a grim past;
the fingers of Reality in a world
of pineapple roses;

And the Moon hanging there,
ever learning, hearing all and seeing all...
shining eye watching the world...
while we sleep.

Ginger Leigh Wright

Commemorating

At the creek bank, long the road
they gathered.
Old, young, his descendants, mostly,
to remember.
To remember and reestablish strong family ties
Love, faith, strength, humility,
traits he treasured rose in each,
As pulled ribbons revealed a bronze marker
lettered on each heart there, as on the bronze,
by tales of family lore.
Tales told and retold as examples for life
As ideals stitched on a sampler.

Saye G. Sharp

Epitaph For A Chicken

A chicken makes a dainty dish
To set upon the table, if altered properly;
And many people eat the meat
Who wouldn't know the tracks
If they saw them in the mud.
But I know what a chicken is
I've seen them walk about in colorful array.
They're pretty birds and proud and unafraid.
They've come to trust in man.
Every time I take a bite
I know that it took a hand
To sever the body from the head;
Or if it was prepared with special care
Someone hurled it swiftly overhead and through the air
With a fist around its neck
And with a twist there was a swish-
And snap, it was longer by a third.
Then it was thrown upon the ground
Where it bounced around awhile.
The bird became quite still
That only yesterday was eating worms and scratching
in manure,
Little aware that his feathers would be plucked
And he could rise so soon to glory
On the table of his Lord.

E. M. Blankenship

Moods

unrest, anxiety, depression,
acquiescence, remotivation, elation
that I call philosophic speculation,
that I call poetic contemplation,
that I call social sensitivity,
that I call spiritual acclimation.
Wouldn't it be a fine joke on me
If I should finally learn
something I did or didn't eat
Gave me each turn

Kenton Weatherman

Last Night Ride

Late night radio stations fade in and fade out
impatient fingers try to lock in on
anything that might break the loneliness of this trip
Preacher comes in only to drown in the static
pieces of an old song are heard, somewhat distant
cursing softly, he turns off the radio
fixes his eyes on the highway, and waits for dawn

Ron Rash

I Wonder If A Bird Can Smile

Three birds came by in a row
They were all of a size
But one old and wise,
Seemed by some instinct to know
Where each tidbit lay
Grabbed and moved away
The others weren't lazy or slow;
They came in a churn,
And each in his turn,
Picked with a marvelous show,
But a beak full of dirt,
And a hunger that hurt,
Was all they got for their go
Silly birds not to have known
Each must scratch out his own
Poorly fed;
Being led;
Never getting ahead.
I wonder how a bird would smile
I thought they were smiling the while
As if, at least they weren't eating alone.

Kenton Weatherman

View From Parkway Overlook
No. 19: Balsam Mountain Range

I watch you in silence
and almost in reverence
as you sleep
languid, inert
sprawled beneath a blanket
of resplendent blue velvet
slightly rumpled
somewhat creased

A giant
you sleep
as the ridges of your spine
boldly touch the sky.

Jane Best

The present has Indian-given the beginning.
Some tell us we've short-changed the everlasting.
Scars should show us where we've come from:
the garden of Adam to the Eve of destruction:
the country club financiers, middle rung suburbs,
unfortunate slums
Approaching the fort-century of this government;
from countries uncounted, our people* were sent
Since 1865, this is some damn reconstruction.
And what of those who we invaded;
against those the battles we escalated
for our selfish discriminating purposes;
Those who suffered their land, food, way of life
our life,
promises, population, disease, disguished contracts:
tremendous losses?
Bought-centennial? Bicentennial?
In relative peace they lived here thousands of years;
Now they've nothing but tears
and we've developed forty-times overkill

*our people - settlers, immagrants, refugees

Speedy Holbrook

Gardner's Imagination

My pansy shyed away,
As I watered its roots.
My venus fly trap closed,
As I fed it a fly
My rose bush pricked,
As I pruned its leaves.
But my sunflower smiled
When I ate its seeds.

Leslie Aaron

Linear Poem 04 from the Meta Realm

The five realms: (1) NR: Natural Realm; (2) PR: Political Realm; (3) TR: Technological Realm; (4) SR: Spiritual Realm; (5) SHR: Specifically Human Realm.

NR (1) Fire creaks through the cinders and babies
of the city dump; the ashcans and kraft bags
flame like balloon embryo heads caught
in apocalypse.

PR (1) Fire in the City! Naturally, what would you expect
from the evil sprawl; you would expect in that place
of harlotry and babel and perversion and polygot,
that den of porno, abortion, entropy and infanticide
that Fire would come to purge.

TR (1) five companies of helmeted black and orange
fire-resistant city service employees
responded in hook and ladder, CO_2 and anti-combustible
water pressure hookups and sirens and red lights
and big tires gripping the pavements and
heroism skidding around the edges of
the Fire and responded to the emergency and
the emergency was saved.

SR (1) Western Civilization and Mysticism
have their preludes and their postludes;
dry scarecrows mutter amid the dry straw;
cheap bungalows mutter amid the parched second-growth
of the fire-blast, fire-trap canyons;
the babies squall in their mothers'
spiritually empty and wooden wombs;
End of Mysticism and mimicry of silence;
the babies will never learn to say
the first Word and never learn how
to unsay it, the necessity of over-coming
by silence the dazzle-light
that is from carrion to carrion flowing.

TR (2) actually it was bombers, a whole horde
of bright aluminum Scythian scarecrows
riding down the sky; the firestorm
gave a total death zone of one point five miles
and a partial death zone of five miles,
within which the soapsuds melted
on the newly washed corpses,
and the unborn babies melted
in their mothers' wombs.
Skeletons of frameworks were charcoaled;
shadows left standing on empty walls;
darkness left striding in the hot and
dazzle-faked afternoon,
and the streets were coated
with the residue of life.

SHR (1) Wah! I want my mama! Wah!
I want my cheap, sentimental effect! Wah!
I want my political ideological fix! Wah!
I want my fifty cent fare over the five-lane
tollbridge over the Styx! Wah! Wah! Wah!

and the second age of human is death, all grass
is grass; the fire devoureth whom it will;
stay not to see whom the vultures draw near,
they draw near the dazzle of thy dying aura,
how they wheel over the trademarts and the
insurance towers and the scraps of newspapers
nastying the corners of the street-vomit.
Aw, it's not so bad, mate, really; if it weren't
for fire and arson, rape and abortion, murder and mugging,
sadism and masochism, glass and steel, asphat and concrete,
uppers and downers, trippers and grafters, rain and shine,
silence and shadow, sorrow and grief, all in all,
it'd be a pretty good life, and anyway--

TR (3) Tolit paper, being of flimsy construction,
caught fire first, even while being stuffed
in the diarrhea-infested arse; city office buildings
were the next to go. The wind velocity in the area
of the edges of the firestorm exceeded
fourhundred miles an hour; people and
baby carriages were caught up and flung
into the fire, head-first; others,
who huddled in the cellars and the deeps
of the sewers and in the bomb and storm shelters,
were suffocated as the air rushed out into the
vacuum created by the firestorm's
indwelling center. Before the fire
reached them or passed over them, they died,
quietly, in one another's arms.

MR (2) Plastic milk bottles melted
into the bones beneath the hands
that held them and into the milk-teeth
of those that drank from them;
a long hot summer, the white sky
sheathes one mask and then another
in the July-ice-scars; the fire
lumbers forward, bearing abandoned
matresses and genetic culls
in the green Tiger and spikey arms;
its rawboned face splits in the cliche
of a smile beyond blessing; the flame
sputters behind Hoss's broad but amiable
but honest but tough but tender face.

SHR (2) What I say, if you want to listen,
is after every long hot summer
comes in a little icicle rain;
the green corn sprouts through the mugger's
vampyr arms, the vemon is milked
from the politician's fangs; the babies
in the ditch, abandoned, dissolve
in the warm, April rain. I mean,
everybody's got something to look forward;
lyrics to melodie and starres to night;
to innocent to heavene and the greatly righteous
to the bright and devouring flame.
And I look forward to a bottle of beer!
Good cheer! Good hope!
Don't let the documentaries
get you down!

Amon Liner

Visitation

When flacid arms fall down and outward fling,
And weary eyes roll back and close in death,
We choose a soft and gentle hymn to sing,
A coffin lined in silk, a lovely wreath,
A mid-income display of thoughtful grief.
All for the woman who alone did weep,
Whose twisted features gnawed at our belief,
Who coldly smiles at visitors who peep
At her indifferent repose and empty sleep.

Joyce Brown

EZRO
The Turkey Man

He used to frighten me
with his
big black face,
loose gobbling lungs
and tattered gray clothes.
His poking finger
would pick through the
cobweb of every nightmare.
Often
I wondered of the food he ate,
his wife's appearance
or his home.
Sometimes I visioned
a witches cave
from which he emerged
every morn.
Yet never did I really know
anything factual of him.
I only called him
the "turkey man."

Yesterday,
he came hobbling into the store
on a slant worn foot
upon which shoes
had long ago conformed.
I saw not a horror
but
a tired old man.
Once again my
adolescent scare
had entered my world.

He gobbled at a lady
and she did laugh.
His bony finger
poked a child's back;
she jumped...
but giggled.

Shuffling he made
his way up to me.
Lowering his head
he slowly asked,
"Lady...
don't get mad at me for asking,
but can I use a bathroom?"
And I
lowering my head
had to reply
a rehearsed answer.
"I'm sorry sir
they're employee only."

Teresa Price

1st Place High School
Competition

The Harvest Moon

The harvest moon rests in an autumn sky. It watches over the enlightened fields as they are stripped of their treasures. The yellow corn and the golden pumpkins, such treasures only a king should own.

A mother stands over a warm stove and cooks a harvest meal. The children sit near the bright red fire and play autumn game. Tired from a hard day's work, the father rests quietly in an enormous gray chair.

The trees turn into rainbows, and the land into a willowy whiteness, and the hh harvest moon rests in an autumn sky.

Jewel Revais

2nd Place High School Competition

The Classroom

The heat steams out and floats around the room,
In the far corner stands the maid's old broom.
Trying to figure out a problem,
everyone has their heads bent down
And on their gloomy faces, they wear a cold frown.
I can see the pencils as they move across the paper,
I can hear someone using the teacher's
brand new stapler.
I can smell and almost taste the food fixed for lunch,
And as I bend down, the cold wooden desk I touch.

Christie Sasser

3rd Place High School Competition

The Throne of Saturn

There they are, the poor slighted population
of a splendid land.
Work, work you fools of heredity, keep it
beautiful,
You shadows of a once glorified race,
You mongrels, who couldn't keep the pace,
of a world you built.
To the rings, as high as the moon,
Beauty to the hilt.
You sacrificed your throne, you poor
wretched souls
To a dying peoples, far away
Who couldn't stand the cold.
We have you now, you idle serfs
We have your temples, your roads of gold.
Your men we enslaved, your women we sold
Cry now, poor creature, cry now for your dead
Cry worse if you don't get fed.
You had love,
We have power,
So die bleeding dove.

Eddie Huffstetler

Lost Child

Monday they gave her a golden flower.
Tuesday they gave her silver moon drops.
Wednesday they gave her love and passion.
Thursday they just ignored her.
Friday they let her heart break.
Saturday she died, alone.
Sunday they put a daisy on her
grave, for the lost child was
no more.

Mickie Norman

Love Explained

If I were to write about sadness,
What would I say
That has not been written before of
Tear-stained paper and dead roses;
Of dreams cast asunder with no
Regard to their degree of completion;
Of dividing of ways and futures.

If I were to write about desire,
What could I express
That two eyes meeting have not
Already burned their purpose; and bodies
Touching with not the slightest touch
That lips trembling beneath lips have not
Uttered with the universal sigh.

If I were to write about tenderness,
I would take his hands
And place the pen there for these words.
I would see his tears for my sorrows,
And gaze upon him in his sleep
As he turns in slumber to me
And smiles because he knows he is safe.

If I were to write about my love,
What could I tell
That has not been told over ages
Of yellow days and a Christmas tree;
Of identical thoughts and ideas.
If I were to write about my love,
I would simply write my life in his.

Anne C. Deaton

ON A STRANGE CATHEDRAL DECORATION
AT 'S HERTOGENBOSCH, FLANDERS
AND THINKING OF BOSCH

Demons ride with workmen
on a flying buttress at St. John's.
   No wonder Bosch was born there.

What nobody understands today
is why nobody locked him up
as he far, far exceeded
   strange companions riding upward.

      They say, on the side of normalcy,
      he played Christmas music for his church
      and belonged to the Brotherhood of the
         Holy Virgin.

Still, the fellow's strange all right,
and that egg/spaceship of men carousing
in hell is hardly the stuff
of the Kansas City Star.

Personally, I think he put
something else in the thuribles
   and breathed
                real
                   hard.

B. Cox

Upon Occasion of My Death

A car hit me this morning when I crossed the street
    and you didn't see and
I'm glad you were not there.
It was green, the car and the grass
on level with my eyes
on level with the pavement
and I looked at the sky for a time so long
that it looked green like the grass and the car
While the sky looked back green
the pavement where my eyes lay looked red
and this girl near the red pavement screamed
    my God, my God, she's dead,
and she fainted without a trace away
A thousand sticky flies were in my hair
and when I tried to say
    they would get in my contact lenses
the contacts were between my gums and my mouth
and crumbling, making me gurgle and drown softly
    till I knew if you had been there
        you would have cried
to see all those red papers from my notebook
    blowing cross the street
    So I cried myself since you weren't there to
        cry for me
and it felt good to cry and watch the green sky
while the flies and people screamed nearby
on the street...

Shelly Wilson

Memories

Alone,
Forsaken,
Barren- except for memories.
Memories that follow
bringing a new luster, a new outlook,
the magic of that special moment long before.
Memories that make the moments easier to bear,
and tie the future with the past.
But then, like that moment, the memory fades.
Only to return to previous feelings,
Alone,
Forsaken,
Barren- except for that time to again return
to the world of memory.

Paul Lawrence

For the Moon

Dear constant orb, you've seen all.
Your glow fills me
with the essence of forever.
Yet, there is a presence of time.

Dana Dillon

Turtle Meat

After three days of draggin' the river, they hadn't found it so ol' man Bridges, who owned the cotton mill, said he'd pay twenty-five dollars to anybody that found the body. Seems his wife was about to go hysterical thinking 'bout her only daughter being in that river.

Next morning just about everybody in the whole damn town was down at the river tryin' to find that body. Ol' man Bridges was down there too an' he just stood there on the bank with no expression on his face like he didn't care if they found it or not. Most of the men was out in boats or wading the shallows, poking poles in the water or draggin' big hooks crosst the bottom. The bank was lined with women an' kids and you'd a thought it was the Fourth of July or somethin' the way they was yellin' and carryin' on.

About an hour after they'd started, Sandy Thompson yelled he thought he'd found the body. A couple of women acted like they was gonna faint an' the kids started running around and screamin', but it warn't nothing to get excited about 'cause it was only a dead dog somebody'd dumped in the river.

By dinnertime the women an' kids had all gone home and soon the men started giving up. By three o' clock only a couple of men was still on the river and they was pretty wore out and soon they gave it up too.

After they left I went down the river and checked my turtle traps. Three of them was empty 'cept for the chicken guts I'd used for bait, but the fourth had a big snapper that probably weighed

near twenty pounds. I grabbed him by the tail an' carried him back home with me. All the while that turtle was tryin' his damndest to latch onto me, so I held him as far away from me as I could. After I got home I laid him on the grass an' went to get my ax in the woodshed. All of a sudden I got this idea so I put that turtle in a big washtub and headed for town.

I got back home right before sundown an' dumped that turtle out of the washtub. I poked a stick in its face 'till that turtle latched on; I pulled an' it held on somethin' fierce. While it held onto the stick I got a string I'd bought in town an' tied it round that turtle's neck. It warn't easy to do, an' a couple of times he let go of that stick an' tried to grab me, but I finally got it tied on good. After I got me a bite to eat I picked that turtle up by the tail an' carried him down to the river and threw him in. I gave him plenty of slack string an' just let him go where he pleased. It soon got to be too dark to see anythin', an that turtle was just movin' a little bit ever once in a while, so I unwound the two hundred yards of string on that spool an' just let it float down the river. I tied the end of it to the limb of an oak tree that kinda hung over the water. Then I went home.

I woke up at daybreak the next day and got an ol' bamboo fishin' pole I had in the woodshed. Then I walked down to the river. When I got there I saw the line was still on the tree so I started wrappin' the line around that spool. At first the line was real slack and I was afraid the turtle might have bit that string in two, but after I'd pulled in 'bout fifty yards of string, I felt him on the other end. I tightened the line an' found he was 'bout a hundred yards downstream under the bank. I kept the line fairly tight an' started walkin' down the river, windin' the string as I went. When I got to where he was I wrapped that string around a tree an' started pokin' under the bank with my bamboo pole. I didn't feel nothin' so I finally took off my shoes and dived in. The first four times I went under I didn't find nothing an' I wondered if maybe it hadn't worked like I figured it would. But the fifth time I found her. She was kinda stuck in some brush at the bottom. At first I thought it'd be easy to get her out but I nearly drowned doing it. Her body was kinda

bloated like a rat's is when it falls into a well. She musta weighed twice what she weighed when she was alive. The water was muddy and I couldn't see nothin' so that didn't help either, but I finally got her out of that brush an' half out of the water. After draggin' her up on the bank I pulled that turtle in too but not before I nearly pulled its head off. It didn't want to come out of that water for nothin'. I tied that turtle to a tree nearby so he wouldn't crawl off and then went an' put my shoes back on.

It was then I looked at the body real good for the first time. It'd turned all kinda bluish green an' was sorta shriveled up an' bloated at the same time. Part of her face was kinda eaten away too. I guess the turtle did that.

Well, I couldn't leave that body there 'cause somebody else might get it and claim the reward money for themselves, so I dragged an' carried it the half mile to the house an put it in the woodshed. I left the turtle tied to that tree. I could come back and get him later.

After I got somethin' to eat I went to town an' told everybody I'd found the body. Everybody was all excited an' soon Ol' man Bridges came round and asked me where the body was, so I told him. Ol' man Bridges told me to stay where I was while he went an got his car, so I stayed there an' told people 'bout a hundred times where and how I'd found the body. Some of them looked kinda sick when I told 'em 'bout the turtle but most of 'em thought I was real smart an' you could tell they wished they'd thought of it themselves.

About twenty minutes later ol' man Bridges comes by an' I hopped in the back seat. It was the first time I'd ever been in such a fancy car, an' I'd of enjoyed it a lot 'cept ol' lady Bridges was up in the front seat cryin' and carryin' on somethin' awful. When I started tellin' ol' man Bridges 'bout the turtle, (I was kinda proud of myself for being so smart), she started cryin' even worse an' ol' man Bridges told me to shut the hell up and I did an' didn't say another word.

By the time we got home there was already 'bout twenty people hangin' around the woodshed. They said they hadn't been in there but I kinda doubt it cause a couple of men looked sorta sickly. When ol' man Bridges and I got out of the car they kinda moved away from the woodshed an' stared at the ground. Nobody said a word. Ol' lady Bridges stayed in the car and I believe everyone was just as glad she did. Ol' man Bridges went into the woodshed an' I followed him in. It was kinda dark inside but I suppose you could see her 'bout as good as you would want to. She was the same way I'd left her 'cept flies was all over her and she was beginning to smell a bit. I picked up a piece of old cardboard and tried to git them flies off her, but soon as I'd quit they'd lite on her again so I finally gave up tryin' an' just let 'em crawl on her. All the while ol' man Bridges didn't say a thing but his lower lip trembled once in a while. He just stood there lookin' at her an didn't even look at me when I asked him if I could have my reward money. He finally reached into his pocket and got the money out of his billfold. He handed it to me without hardly lookin' to count the money.

Ol' man Bridges walked out after a couple more minutes an' told one of the men who worked for him to go tell the undertaker to get her in a box as soon as he could. Then he left.

A lot more people come while we was waitin' for the undertaker an' once in a while a man would go into the woodshed and look at the body. The men didn't want the women or children to see it but Harold Wallace's boy, Carlton, sneaked in whilest no one was lookin'. He come out howling a few moments later an' wouldn't stop for half an hour. They say he had nightmares for months an' a lot of people felt sorry for him seein' he was so young and had seen such a sight, but I kinda felt it served him right though I never said so.

Finally, Jesse Hamrick the undertaker come in his wagon an' a couple of us men helped him carry the box into the woodshed. We put the body into it an' Jesse Hamrick nailed it shut soon as he'd put somethin' in there to try an' kill the smell. We loaded her into the wagon and Jesse Hamrick took her straight to the graveyard. They buried her that afternoon.

I was gonna go to the funeral but I was kinda tuckered out an' didn't feel like walkin' to town an' back so I just rested a while and then went and got my turtle. He was tied to that tree same as I'd left him an' meaner than ever. I tried to untie that knot from round his neck but he kept tryin' to bite me, so I finally gave up and cut the string 'bout six inches from the knot. That was close as I could get. Soon as I'd done that I carried him home.

It was almost dark when I got home so I hurried to the woodshed an' got my ax. I cut off his head and built a fire.

I ate most of him that night but had some left over so I put it in some of my turtle traps next morning. It seems sorta funny but it don't really matter what kinda meat you put in the traps. It's all the same to a turtle.

Ron Rash

Circle of the Damned

We wait. Together. Alone.
Wait for time's ending.
It never comes. Still,
We wait. Never speaking.
Never acknowledging anyone.
There is nothing to say.
Love is gone. Hate came to stay.
A marriage, cold and heavy,
Is all we have left: a roof against the rain,
Firewood for the winter, stale bread,
Broken plates and a dismal, joyless bed.
I name it limbo. You insist Pluto.
We do manage to agree
Life is empty and dark. While we wait.
Starships, determined to discover
True lovers, hastily change course
And steer away, knowing
We are dead space.

Virginia L. Rudder

Old Man and Old Mountain

Old mountain looking down
   On the little village
Old mountain barricading the
   Valley with your great mass
Old mountain filled with
   Creases and crevices
Listening in on the conversations
   Of the old, withered men
Who sit around the coal-black stove-
Old mountain, what bit of wisdom
   Will you glean today from
   These tobacco-spitting farmers?

Old man, as you spin your yarns
   And tell your tales
What wisdom have you taken from these hills?
Old man, as you've tilled these fertile vales
What values have you found hidden there?
Old man rising early with the sun
   Walking the rough mountain trail-
Old man looking to the hills for his strength
Old man and Old mountain wearing-
   out together.

Daisy K. Daughtrey

Lament of the Sibyl

"How did I get so <u>old?</u>"
Kurt Vonnegut
<u>Slaughterhouse Five</u>

I am lost behind these old eyes
within this shriveled body
of wrinkled sagging skin,
waxy yellow hair,
knotty muscles
and stringy veins,

a repulsive sight, wisely kept caged
within a bottle,

though I hang suspended,
clawing at its clear numb wall,
begging release.

I am caught in this bottle,
bearing out the prophecy
dictated by too many grains of sand
held in a hand too young
to feel the joy of death,
to sense the pain of age.

Ensnared,
I sleep but cannot die,
I dream but cannot hope,
I live but cannot touch.

I am trapped within this cave,
mocked by the acolytes
who ask what I wish,
pointing to a hundred openings

while I hang suspended

within a body
within a bottle
within a cave,

given the wisdom to foresee,
denied the power to enact.

Joyce Brown

To Dream of Kings

Time has altered little of the massive
building on the square, statues of
forgotten heroes, ordered greens,
a fountain, like a prism, that breaks life
into many segments,
one by one.
The bench I used to lean on now holds me
comfortably. I listen, I can hear them playing,
old men by a two-toned board,
"You gotta jump me, Forrest."

Even now he turns to me,
"We got 'im now, boy." Come the wink
with the snuff-brown smile.

"One more move and he's got to crown me."
I reach to touch him; mistakes have cost
him much, cost me much.

My hand passes through the Salvation tweed,
gone, the pauper that dreamed of Kings.

T. F. Philbeck

Chapter on Dieting

The bottoms of my feet
have lately been
peeling. I have
almost lost my
life in the car thinking
about using them on my
hamburgers because
we are definitely out
of
onions.
I am on my way to the store.
Screech! Elfin, es todo, etc.

Tommy Swinney

Fort Fisher's Hermit

Sixteen years in an earthen bunker, dark and damp,
naked and open to teeming crowds of tourists
during all the summer days, hot and long,
and in the nights and winter days
hurling hard his questions
into the salty, stinging spray,
pacing the trackless beach long and early,
running ever through his mind the phrases
he one day would bind into his heavy book.

Confronting hecklers, bums and drunks,
ridiculed, robbed, beaten, and bruised,
refusing to leave his own wide Walden,
turning deaf ears to pleas from family,
and from the governor of the state,
never budging from that bunker
until he reached grey seventy-nine,
when undeniable death
came through the bunker door,
eviction writ in hand.

I wish he lay not in Sunset Park
in Cleveland County's clay,
but rather in a sandy grave
not far from Fisher's Fort
where the surf still booms,
and the gulls still cry with joy
to greet each dawn.

T. M. Linnens

A Blue Mood

I'm in a mood to write the blues.
I wish that I could sing .
If I could sing I would sing all day.
My song would vibrate and fill the air,
so all people could flow with the blues
I feel and feel them.
God, I'm down.
Pick me up so I can change my tune.

Marsha Huffstetter

1967 Revisited

Today, yesterday's heroes appear
a little less like giants out of an autumn sky
and a little more like ordinary men
who often saw the black side of an illusion
long before it had the chance
to crumble the innocense of a younger mind;
ordinary men who were forced to live again
the pleasures of the illusion
as well as the pain of molding reborn innocense
into a younger perspective.

Perhaps, dead heroes are themselves
illusions of a phoenix
searching for a place to land

Don Spence

Man Made of Arrows

Man made of arrows enters the night
Unsteady player on a stage designed
For the sleight of mind focused man
Of an unfocused light wary knight
In episodes of dreams ending
Out in the cold now
Hearth and home the gold suspended
Impressario laughing moon
With bells rarely in tune
From age he knew his youth
And time did teach him truth
That hell's not just of a devil's
Making.

Jeana R. Towler

We met at Knockbush city limits
Eating a pizza, we were so in love
Me with you and you with someone else
   though I was in the dark.
I bought an Escher
So did my boss--
Later on
They were all hot; but mum$ the word
And nobody wants to take the fall.
He was tall with a long knife strapped to
   his leg and we knew someone would like him
Someday.

C. Alston

To Marc

Someday, you'll bounce into the room when
I'm totally unsuspecting
And you'll ask about--girls
Or perhaps it'll be God
Or maybe even arithmetic.
And I'll be ineloquent, but firm:
"Yes, that's true, but . . . ."

Later, you'll sift it all and find the illogic
And you'll return, perhaps sullen
Or you won't return
Or you'll come just to see Mom.
And I'll be polite, reserved, and hurt:
"Yes, you're right, but . . . ."

One day, you'll call from Ethiopia while I'm
clipping the dog
And you'll ask about things
Or perhaps it'll be God
Or maybe even the book.
And I'll be more eloquent, but less firm:
"Yes, we have, but . . . ."

William B. Stowe

MERIT AWARDS

Field Trip

Lament of the Sibyl

Fort Fischer's Hermit

The Habya's Daughter

Gallery

BICENTENNIAL AWARD

Independent's Day

HONORABLE MENTION

The Memory in the Wine

Peaceful Valley Tressel

Bicentennial Blues

The Southern Red Fox

CONTRIBUTORS

Gil Blackburn.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Daisy Daughtrey.....Forest City, N.C.

Charles Alston.....Greensboro, N.C.

Ron Rash.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Bruce Van Blarcom.....Montreat Anderson

Betty S. Cox.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Tommy Swinney.....Gardner-Webb College

Jane Best.....Shelby, N.C.

Amon Liner.....Greensboro, N.C.

P.A. Cline.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Asa Ashanti.....Charlotte, N.C.

Errol Miller.....Monroe, La.

Ginger Wright.....Gardner-Webb College

Shelly Wilson.....Vilas, N.C.

R. Rountree.....Charlotte, N.C.

Barbara Street.....Durham, N.C.

Debbie Pierson.....Gardner-Webb College

Suzette Thompson.....Forest City, N.C.

Speedy Holbrook.....Gardner-Webb College

Dana Dillon.....Gardner-Webb College

Rozella Z. Wolbarsht.....Durham, N.C.

Sam McMillan.....Forest City, N.C.

Ernest Blankenship.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

John Lattimore.....Boone, N.C.

Saye G. Sharp.....Cornelius, N.C.

Tom Philbeck.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Mickie Norman.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Helen Cornwell Logan.....Kings Mountain, N.C.

Nina Palmer.....Charlotte, N.C.

Kenton Weatherman.....Rutherfordton, N.C.

Anne C. Deaton.....Charlotte, N.C.

Jim Taylor.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Eddie Huffstetler.....Cherry Grove Beach, S.C.

Jonellen Heckler.....Charlotte, N.C.

Leslie Aaron.....Charlotte, N.C.

Beth Graham.....Durham, N.C.

Virginia Rudder.....Hurdle Mills, N.C.

T. Max Linnens.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Aleeta Walker.....Shelby, N.C.

Wayne Blankenship.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

William B. Stowe.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Christie Sasser.....Albemarle, N.C.

Anne Swan.....Marion, N.C.

Russ Anderson.....Gardner-Webb College

Teresa Price.....Rutherfordton, N.C.

Joyce Brown.....Boiling Springs, N.C.

Bobby Setzer.....Gardner-Webb College

Marsha Huffstetter.....Gardner-Webb College

Jewel Reavis.....Kings Mountain, N.C.

Neil Farr.....Statesville, N.C.

Wendell Curtis.....Asheville, N.C.